

WHAT IT DOES & WHAT IT NEEDS



Introduction

Suffolk School for Parents is an independent charity, registered no. 1091216 which helps children of pre-school age who have motor learning difficulties.

The School has been operating in the County for the last ten years, although, nationally, the earliest School was established in over twenty-five years ago.

Parents and carers are very much at the forefront of the School's approach as it is through them that their child's learning and development potential can be maximised. They are as important as the individual children. By working with the parents the School helps them to help their child. The School provides the glue between the core medical services (hospitals and doctors) and home, demonstrating that a happy and fulfilling family life can be attained.



Parents are often unsure of the extent of the challenges they face and the School staff provide help and reassurance and a vision of a bright future. The parents then become much more active in the developmental side of care, and with the School's encouragement and support, great results are achieved.

Motor learning difficulty?

This term is used to describe any kind of difficulty with movement and co-ordination.

This may arise from a wide range of conditions including Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, infantile spasms, chromosomal abnormalities or autism. Many cases have no formal diagnosis and the range of disability is from mild to severe.



What does the School do?

Its objective is to awaken each child's senses and encourage self-awareness through activities and experiences that are fun. The teaching methods are adapted from those developed by the Pető András Institute for Conductive Education¹ in Budapest and involve breaking down the complexities of learning into structured and achievable tasks which are repeated time and again until the child is able to do them independently.

These techniques maximise each child's potential for achievement, problem solving and independence.

Crucial to the learning process is the committed involvement of parents and/or carers. They are fully involved in each teaching session. This collaborative approach increases their effectiveness as parents and/or carers, increases their confidence and empowers them by developing their skills in identifying, addressing and answering the needs of their children.

The School recognises that parents have needs too, which are met by providing the opportunity for sharing experiences, challenges and solutions; whilst also providing support and guidance on their children's conditions and how they can be best alleviated.



¹ For more detail on Conductive Education, see for example, <http://www.conductive-ed.org.uk/What.htm>

Children with motor learning difficulties can have severe problems with both education and health. The School delivers a holistic approach, developing both the child's learning and wellbeing, and offering solutions to the many problems faced by the children and their parents.

Once a child has completed a course of sessions or has become of school age the care doesn't end there. Through working with the schools, staff keep in contact with the children checking progress. There are many cases where the pre-school intervention of the School has led to remarkable success. At the recent Christmas party where some past pupils attended, it was clear to see the progress: a number of the children managed to get themselves to Santa where previously they required help.

These practical achievements are overlaid on the formal evaluation processes which the School has to undergo from outside agencies such as, Ofsted, The Local Authority's Early Years Team, quality Assurance Scheme, The School for Parents Conductive Education Minimum Standards and in complying with the legal requirements for child protection, CRB checking, data protection and equal opportunities. However, perhaps more importantly, the School has, in addition, its own formal progress checking mechanisms and constantly reviews the plan and treatment at an individual level to ensure that the best results are obtained for each child.

The need for support

The very nature of the work the School does is costly. It demands specially qualified and trained teaching staff. Staff are all qualified to Children's Care Learning and Development NVQ level 2/3 with some being degree qualified in Early Childhood Studies and have been Conductive Education Trained by Scope. Session sizes are very small with the normal teacher to child ratio being 1:2

Next year's (ending March 2011) costs are estimated to amount to [£76,000] and this allows the School to run five sessions each week at its premises in Sproughton, on the SW outskirts of Ipswich. With a maximum of six children per session, the annual cost equates to £2,500 per child.



Given the many pressures on the families with whom the School works, not the least of which are financial, its policy of delivering its services at no charge to families and children has been in place since its inception. The

Trustees and management team wish to place no obstacle in the way of any child with motor learning difficulties, their parents or carers attending the School.

The School is now actively seeking financial support from individuals, companies, charities and foundations. A relatively small sum of money would make a remarkably large difference in the lives of children with motor learning difficulties and their parents and/or carers who have the primary responsibility of enabling their children to maximise their potential.

Would you consider helping us?

£2,500 would support a place for a child for a year

£6,500 would support the School for a month

If you are interested in what we do and/or would like to discuss our work further or arrange a visit, please contact Alison Stonham, our Team Leader, on 01473 652880 or for more about us, please see <http://www.ssf.org.uk/>